

Message Framing

Brief Program Description

Message Framing refers to persuasive health communication that emphasizes either the benefits of adopting or the costs of not adopting desirable health behaviors. The hypothesis guiding the development of messages to promote smoking cessation is that it would be better promoted with messages emphasizing the benefits of not smoking (gain-frames), rather than the costs of continued smoking (loss-frames).

Most anti-smoking messages focus on the costs or risks of tobacco use. However, Message Framing research, conducted with college-aged smokers and adult smokers attending smoking cessation clinics, suggests that videotaped messages promoting the benefits of smoking cessation, rather than the risks of continued smoking, may be especially effective.

The Message Framing intervention includes videotaped programs about smoking cessation that are either gain- or loss-framed, as well as supplemental print materials with congruent gain- or loss-framed messages. Overall, gain-framed messages shaped smoking-related beliefs and attitudes in healthy ways, compared to loss-framed messages. Gain-framed messages were better accepted than loss-framed messages immediately and at 6 weeks posttest. In smokers, 6-week post-assessment revealed that any type of gain-frame, whether visual or auditory, decreased temptations to smoke and reduced actual smoking behavior. Program participants included African American, Hispanic/Latino, and White young adults.

Program Development Support

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